



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

AGENDA DATE: April 7, 2009

TO: Mayor and Councilmembers

FROM: Public Works Department and Planning Division, Community Development Department

SUBJECT: Upper State Street Setbacks

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council direct staff to initiate possible amendments to the Upper State Street Area Special District Zone setback standards, Santa Barbara Municipal Code Chapter 28.45, in order to accommodate the future transportation needs of the street.

DISCUSSION:

Community Development, Public Works, and Council have been working on a strategy to update the Upper State Street Guidelines since May, 2007. Since then, significant changes have taken place in regard to the City budget, development patterns, and competing City project priorities. As a result, on November 11, 2008, Council agreed with the recommendation of staff and the Finance Committee to prepare simplified development review guidelines based on the approved Upper State Street Study. Council also directed staff to return with a recommendation to ensure that future buildings are constructed far enough back from the street to accommodate long-term future transit options. Staff is proposing an increase in the existing SD-2 setback along State Street.

The Council approved the Upper State Street Study on May 8, 2007. On October 9, 2007, the Council considered a draft work program for implementing a number of recommendations from the Upper State Street Study, including new design guidelines and near-term transportation improvements. Several members of Council expressed concern that the work program would proceed without first considering a longer-term issue of potential dedicated transit lanes along the Upper State Street corridor. Therefore, Council directed that staff postpone its request for approval of the program and funding, and that a request for proposal (RFP) and scope of work for a dedicated transit lane feasibility study be initiated.

On January 29, 2008, the Council approved the RFP and scope of work. On June 10, 2008, Public Works staff held a discussion with the Finance Committee to identify the source(s) of funding to be used for the proposed study cost of approximately \$250,000. The Finance Committee expressed concerns regarding the costs and directed staff to consider phasing the study and reducing the costs.

Staff returned to Council on November 12, 2008 with a range of options, including adopting a simplified version of the Upper State Street Study as simple guidelines. Staff has begun work on the guidelines by translating the Upper State Street Study Improvement Measures Summary into guideline language. Graphic layout of the guideline language, background, issue discussion, maps and photos drawn from the Upper State Street Study into new guidelines is scheduled for April. The guidelines are to be reviewed by the Planning Commission and Architectural Board of Review, and subsequent consideration for adoption by the Council is expected in the summer of 2009.

In response to some Councilmembers' desire to ensure that setbacks be included to provide enough width to accommodate future transit needs, staff recommends amending the Upper State Street setback ordinance. While it is difficult to know exactly what the transportation systems and public realm space needs will be in the future, increasing the setback will provide adequate space for a range of transit options. New buildings will not be constructed in the setback that may someday be purchased for public right-of-way purposes.

Should City Council support this recommendation, staff would evaluate various potential future transit projects and their space requirements, summarize the findings in a report, and return to Council with a proposal to increase the existing setback ordinance accordingly. Based on Council direction, Planning staff would proceed with a zoning ordinance amendment, with the standard process of environmental review, Planning Commission recommendation hearing, Ordinance Committee and Council action. Earlier concepts of design charettes and public workshops would not be included in this effort. Further, it is important to note that this possible setback amendment has not been assigned as an active priority project and would need to be considered in terms of overall Planning Division workload at some future point.

PREPARED BY: Bettie Weiss, City Planner
Robert J. Dayton, Principal Transportation Planner

SUBMITTED BY: Paul Casey, Community Development Director
Christine Andersen, Public Works Director

APPROVED BY: City Administrator's Office